

CHARACTERIZATION AND CONSERVATION OF EDIBLE AND MEDICINAL MUSHROOMS OF WESTERN GHATS OF INDIA

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ABSTRACT: Karnataka is lying between latitude 15° 00' N and longitude 75° 00' E and it hosts 320 km long portion of the Western Ghats stretching north from the lower slopes of the Nilgiri Hills to the Goa and Maharashtra tri-border. Conservation International has notified the Western Ghats as a biodiversity hotspot. The forest vegetation includes wet evergreen and moist deciduous forests and also mangrove swamps. Although a vast amount of literature exists on the flora and fauna diversity of this region, but none takes into account the mushroom biodiversity. Hence explorations were undertaken by Mushroom lab IIHR to document and conserve the mushroom biodiversity of Western Ghats of Karnataka. The forest regions of Shimoga and Kodagu (formerly Coorg) were explored. The exploration included the documentation of species occurring, collection, identification, conservation and domestication of important edible and medicinal mushrooms of the region. The cultures of *Pleurotus djamor*, *Pycnoporus cinnabarinus*, *Trametes spp* and *Ganoderma spp* have been conserved in the Mushroom germplasm repository of IIHR.

Key words: *Biodiversity, India, Karnataka, Kodagu, Mushroom, Shimoga, Western Ghats*